

CARIBBEAN

CATEGORY: DOMINICAN REPUBLIC AND THE CARIBBEAN: NOW

CONCEPTS: WOMEN, family

ACTIVITY: READING A FOLKTALE ABOUT WOMEN IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC.
The following reading is a folk story from the Dominican Republic, as told by Mrs. Tijides Garridos, a native of that country and mother-in-law of Prof. Ralph Stekle Boggs, author of "The King of the Mountain," (New York, The Vanguard Press, Inc., 1960), from which this story was taken.

OBJECTIVES: Students will be introduced to a new social image of Latin American women as pictured in this tale, opposed to the social image produced by conventional stereotypes.

MATERIALS: Reproduction of Who Rules the Roost, a folk story from the Dominican Republic.

PROCEDURE: Distribute and have the students read the story. Several activities may follow the reading.

1. Discussion. What were the students' ideas about Latin American women before reading the story? Did they change? Why? What is a stereotype? How does a stereotype affect the image we create in our minds? How does the Judge's comment reinforce our stereotypes of Latin-American women?
2. A short essay may be written in which students answer the following question: In my society (The U.S./ethnic group), who rules the roost? Why?
3. The opinion of the students as a group may be gathered from these essays. It may be posted and it may serve as a topic of discussion: Why do we think that way?

LEVEL: MIDDLE GRADES

Source: Gibbs, Virginia G. *Latin America: Curriculum Materials for the Middle Grades*. Center for Latin America, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. 1985. 1987.

Who Rules the Roost?

In a small town of the Dominican Republic there once lived two men who were good friends. Both were merchants. One, José, sold yucca and corn. The other, Francisco, sold yams. These two often talked together, about this, that, and the other.

One day, José, the older of the two, said to his friend Francisco, "From the oldest days, from the days when the world began, from the first days Christopher Columbus saw our blessed Island of Hispaniola, and right on down to our day, woman has been the ruler of the house. She is not only queen of the house, but also king."

"Now, José," said Francisco, "I say you are wrong. True, I am not married, as you are, but I say man rules the house, and woman follows. The man heads his home, and his wife obeys him."

"My good friend Francisco! You are a thousand times wrong. Am I not married? I should know! Look around you, right here in our town, and all the farms around the town. Look as far as you like, for that matter. You will always find that I am right, no matter where you look in this world. Woman rules the roost!"

"You are wrong, José, dead wrong. I tell you man is the rooster of the house, and woman just cackles."

And so they argued, but neither convinced the other he was right. It got so that every evening after their work was done they would look for each other and begin to argue the same question over and over.

One evening the argument became livelier than usual, and José said he would prove he was right.

"I'll tell you what we'll do, Francisco. You say that man rules the house. I say that woman rules the roost. We can argue this question until Judgment Day, and we'll get nowhere. Let us put the matter to a test. Whichever of us wins, the other must admit that he was wrong. Agreed?"

"I agree," said Francisco.

"Here's what we'll do. I'll have a dozen horses, and you take a dozen cows. We'll go from house to house and talk to people and find out whether the man of each house or his wife is master. If it's the woman, we'll give her a cow. If it's the man, we'll give him a horse. What do you say to that?"

"That's a good plan. I agree!" said Francisco.

Bright and early the next morning, José was at the meeting place with his dozen horses, and Francisco with his cows. They set out with the animals behind them. "Remember," said Francisco, "the first one who gives away all his animals loses."

When they came near the first house, they could hear before they ever reached the door who was the master there. The woman was screaming at her husband for not having locked up the pigs the night before. The husband stood with head bowed and did not open his mouth.

"Give her a cow!" said José victoriously. And Francisco sadly did so without saying a word.

They went to the next house. While they were still out in the road they heard a woman shout, "Go and get the bread! Be quick about it, and don't argue with me!"

Francisco looked at José in despair and meekly gave that woman a cow. And so they went from house to house, and quickly found out who was the head--the woman of course! Poor Francisco had to give away cow after cow. Finally, he had just one cow left, but José still had his twelve horses. Francisco's face had grown longer and longer, and José's smile had grown broader and broader.

At last they came to the house where the judge of the town lived. The judge was home, but his wife was out.

"Good morning, buenos días, Señor Judge," they both said respectfully. "We are trying to find out who is the master of the house in the different homes of our community; the man or his wife."

"I said the woman always rules the house," said José with great certainty.

"And I said the man is master in his home," said Francisco sadly.

To his surprise, the judge said, "You are right, Francisco. Here in my house I am the head and master. Whatever I say goes. My wife does as I say."

"I am glad to hear that, Señor Judge," said José.

"Yes, it's been that way from the day we were married," the judge said proudly.

"You are a lucky man, Señor Judge," said José. The Lord has blessed you."

"It's really quite simple," continued the judge, encouraged by this respect and admiration. "All you have to do is to begin the very first hour you are married to show your wife that you are the head of the house."

"You are the first man we have found to say that," said Francisco, his spirits rising.

"In this house, my word is law," continued the judge.

"I am delighted to hear that, indeed," said José, "even though I lose a horse by it. You see, Señor Judge, we decided to give a horse to each man who is master of his house. You are the first to get one. I have a dozen horses here. Please come out and choose the one you like best."

"Do you really mean this?" asked the judge.

"Yes, I do," said José. "Come and take the one that pleases you the most."

"This is my lucky day," said the judge joyfully. "You say there are twelve to choose from?"

"That's right!" said José. "See, here they are."

The judge came out and looked them over carefully. "Just look at that black one," he said. "He looks as if he could run a good race. But that brown one! He looks strong and healthy. And that spotted one! He's certainly a handsome horse. Well, well, well! It's really hard to choose. I tell you, José, just wait until my wife comes back. She's a fine judge of horses. Besides, I'd like to please her. It's funny, but she is right most of the time."

"Father in heaven!" cried José. "He's no better than the rest. Give him your last cow, Francisco. Unfortunately for us men, I won. You can easily see who rules the house here."

Francisco did not say one word. Sadly he handed over his last cow to the judge. Then he turned to José and said in two words, "You win!"

Now, everyone knows who rules the roost in the Dominican Republic, just as in all the rest of the world: the woman.